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なるしまゆり

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COMMENT

NARUSHIMA YURI

YURI NARUSHIMA

Despite trials
and tribulations,
volume one is finally out.
Although this comment
is supposed to be all
sunshine, I can't for the
life of me recall the
spelling of *tribulations*..
Sigh.
In any case, I will devote
myself and try my best.
Thanks for sticking
with me.

Vol.01
Yuri Narushima

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TETSUICHI

PROLOGUE

A HUMAN CHILD, EH?

IT HAS BEEN A WHILE SINCE ONE HAS COME THIS FAR.

scrunch

SCRUTCH
*Those who hunt the Kami that are not listed in the Book of Kami
THE MASTER OF THE ANCIENT FOREST, WHO HAS LONG BEEN A FRIEND OF MINE..
..AND ANOTHER OLD COMRADE WHO HAS CROSSED THE DISTANCE ...
...HAVE BOTH CHANGED BEYOND RECOGNITION BECAUSE OF A HUMAN CHILD...
THOUGH YOU SEEM NOBLE IN YOUR OWN WAY...
..ARE YOU GOING TO DEFILE THAT FINE BLOOD OF YOURS BY STOOPING TO THE LEVEL OF THE FILTHY KAMIGATAE*?

DO YOU MEAN TO JUDGE A KAMI* WITH YOUR OWN HANDS?
DO YOU FEAR NEITHER HEAVEN NOR EARTH?
*A deity or a spirit.
THE VERY SAME HEAVEN AND EARTH ...
...ARE WHAT MADE US HUMANS THE ARROGANT CREATURES THAT WE ARE NOW
THERE IS NO REASON TO FEAR EITHER OF THEM.

FLOAT

SCAT
TER
WOULD YOU PLEASE BE HIS FRIEND?
BUT YOU'RE A TENJIN, AREN'T YOU?
THE MASTER IS LONELY BECAUSE HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS.
WELL, YOU SEE...
...MY PARENTS TOLD ME WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO TELL STRANGERS
...
...WHEN WE ARE ASKED ABOUT THE MASTER
YOU MUST HAVE BESTOWED EVERY KIND OF BLESSING
OFTENTIMES, PEOPLE'S LIVES WERE PROLONGED THANKS TO YOU
ONII-CHAN, ARE YOU A TENJIN*?
YOUR HAIR IS A BEAUTIFUL COLOR.
THE FACT THAT YOU SPEAK THE HUMAN LANGUAGE...
...PROVES THAT YOU'RE A KAMI WHO ONCE MINGLED WITH HUMANS
Huff!
*Celestial being.

YOU CAN EVEN SURRENDER
YOU CAN GET ANGRY
OR CRY
...THAT IS ALL THERE IS TO IT.
BUT...
...I WILL MAKE YOU MINE.
SORRY
PEOPLE HAVE THEIR OWN REASONS
REASONS THAT A KAMI DOESN'T HAVE TO KNOW ABOUT

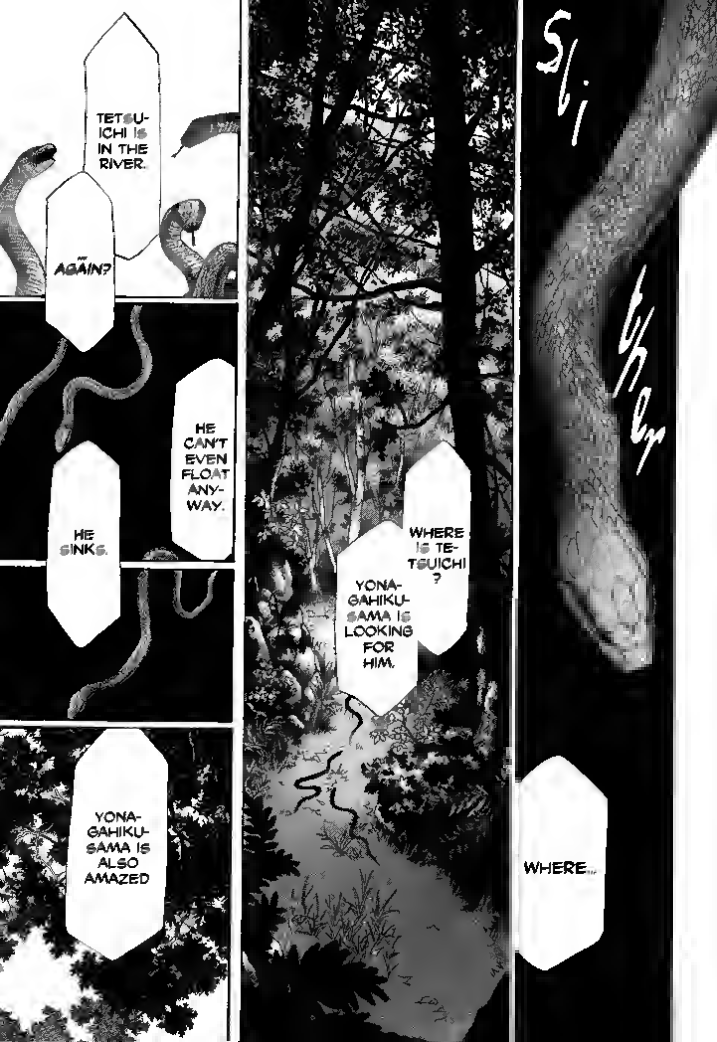
SAKURAHIKO-SAMA!!
AMAZING! YOU'VE DONE IT!
IT'S A BIG CATCH THIS TIME! I'M SURE EVEN HIS EXCELLENCY WILL BE DELIGHTED!
...
I RATHER DOUBT IT.
EH?!
IT'S NOTHING
LET'S GO. WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO WASTE
COMING!

...!
!!!!
YOU TRICKED ME!
SO I DID

I HAVE SOMETHING MUCH MORE IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER
THAN YOUR FEELINGS
AH! WE HAVE A MESSAGE FROM CHIKAGE ONEE-SAMA.
HMM.
SHE SAID THERE'S A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHOSE MOVEMENTS TROUBLE THE SOLDIERS OF THE CAPITAL.
AND IT SEEMS THAT THEY'RE VENTURING TO THE FRONTIER
HMPH.
THEN WE SHOULD HURRY
AFTER ALL, WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO STOP

TETSUICHI

IN THAT OLD MOUNTAIN, THERE LIVES A NOBLE GOD WITH A BEAUTIFUL HUMAN FACE AND A HIDEOUS SERPENTINE BODY
BUT WHAT NOBODY KNOWS IS THAT, THERE ALSO LIVES ANOTHER SMALLER GOD

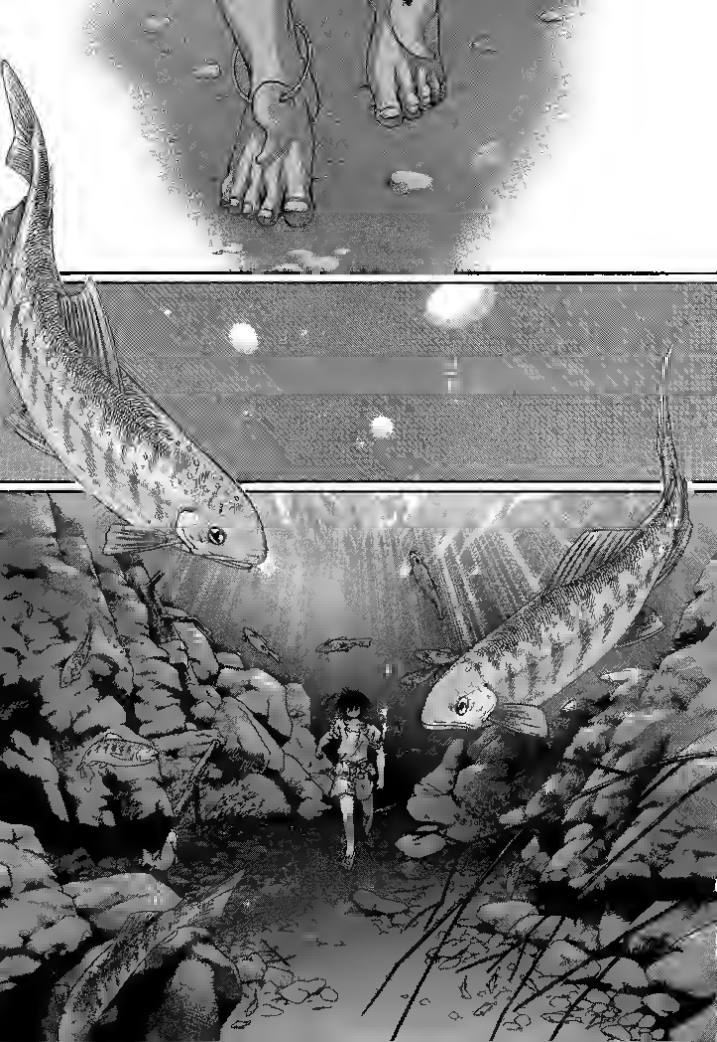

WHERE...
Sli
ther
WHERE IS TETSUICHI?
YONAGAHIKU-SAMA IS LOOKING FOR HIM.
TETSUICHI IS IN THE RIVER.
AGAIN?
HE CAN'T EVEN FLOAT ANYWAY.
HE SINKS.
YONAGAHIKU-SAMA IS ALSO AMAZED

WHY DOES TETSUICHI HAVE TO BE EAGER TO DO THE THINGS HE CAN'T DO?
I WONDER WHY...

WHY_
..DO IT TURN OUT LIKE THIS?
ALRIGHT!
LET'S TRY ONE MORE TIME!

WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE MOTIVATION. NOT THAT I UNDERSTAND IT. BUT IT PROBABLY IS
IN ORDER TO SUCCEED AND GO TO A BRAND NEW LEVEL,
YOU HAVE TO FACE THE PROBLEM HEAD-ON AND KEEP ON TRYING!
ARGH!
OKAY...
WAS IT AS LIGHT AS A LEAF?
WAS MY SPIRIT AS LIGHT AS A FEATHER JUST NOW?

ざぶ
ざぶ
OKAY. TO THE DEPTHS...
ALRIGHT... BE LIGHT. BE LIGHT.
LET'S TRY IT OUT!
ざぶ
NO...
I WON'T GO INTO THE DEPTHS... SUPPOSED-LY...
ざぶ
I WILL FLOAT... SUPPOSED-LY...
ぶく
ぶく
I CAN SWIM. SUPPOSED-LY...



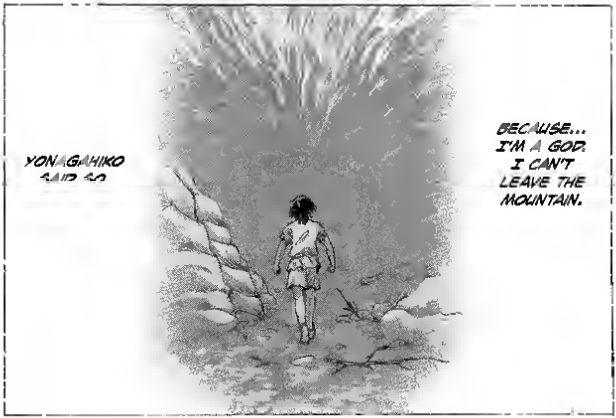
THIS IS...
STRANGE.
.....
ACCORDING TO MY THEORY... LIVING THINGS WILL FLOAT.
I WAS SURE OF IT!
THIS IS REALLY, ABSOLUTELY STRANGE!
SFX: "POKE"
WHY IS IT...
YOU GUYS ARE REALLY ANNOYING!

I DON'T KNOW IF THE PROBLEM IS PHYSIOLOGICALLY OR IF ITS INTINCTS ...!
I DON'T FLOAT, I CAN'T SWIM, I DON'T DROWN, I WALK IN WATER...
SOMEWHERE IN ME THINKS THAT THIS IS ALL JUST SO WEIRD!
WHY IS MY BODY SO STUBBORN IN NOT FLOATING...
I'LL TRY TO BE LIGHTER
EVEN IF I ASKED YONAGAHKO ...
HE WON'T TELL ME WHY OR ANYTHING ELSE ANYWAY...
YOUR NAME IS TETSUICHI.
YOU HAVE BEEN SLEEPING FOR A VERY LONG TIME.

I'VE SEEN THE MOUNTAIN SCENERY CHANGE COUNTLESS TIMES.
IF I DIDN'T COUNT IT, I MIGHT KNOW MY AGE.
BUT TO SAY IT CLEARLY, IT'S MESSED UP.
MY NAME IS TETSUICHI.
AGE? UNKNOWN.
I'VE MESSED UP... MESSED UP.
BECAUSE IN THOSE DAYS WHEN I FIRST OPENED MY EYES,
I WAS LOOKING AT THE SCENERY ABSENT-MINDED.

BUT NOW, I KNOW...
THE CHANGING SCENERY BEFORE MY VERY EYES,
ARE CALLED "SEASONS".

I HAVE LIVED IN THIS MOUNTAIN
ALL THIS TIME,


YONAGAHIKO SAID SO
BECAUSE... I'M A GOD. I CAN'T LEAVE THE MOUNTAIN.

NO!
MISTER GENERAL, YOU CAN'T JUST GO FOR A SWEEPING SEARCH ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN!
YONA-GAHIKO?
WHO IS THAT? I HAVE NOT HEARD OF THAT GOD'S NAME BEFORE!
AHH...
THAT IS...
STARTING FROM HERE TO THE EAST LIES THE SACRED MOUNTAIN OF A GOD CALLED "YONAGA-HIKO-SAMA"
SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, PEOPLE DON'T PASS THROUGH HERE!
HE'S A GOD NOT LISTED IN THE CAPITAL'S "BOOK OF GODS"
BUT HE'S VERY WELL KNOWN TO ALL OF US HERE SINCE LONG AGO

HE'S CALM USUALLY, BUT IT'S SAID THAT HE IS VERY TERRIFYING WHEN ENRAGED
BECAUSE HE HAS EIGHT TAILS, ALL OF WHICH ARE HUGE SNAKES,
HE SPITS OUT BOILING LAVA, AS TOLD BY THE ELDERS
IT IS ALSO SAID THAT HE CAN CAST IRON SPEARS FROM THE SKY AND MAKE IT FALL LIKE RAIN...
WHAT ARE YOU ALL SAYING?!
YOU STUPID FOOLS!
WE DON'T CONSIDER GODS THAT ARE NOT LISTED IN THE "BOOK OF GODS" AS GODS!
IT IS A DEVIL, AN EVIL SPIRIT! IT'S NOT SOMETHING WORTH FEARING!
EH...
NO... THAT IS...

RATHER THAN WORRYING ABOUT TRIVIAL THINGS, IF THIS MOUNTAIN IS REALLY WHAT YOU SAY IT IS, THEN THE CRIMINAL WE ARE AFTER MIGHT BE HIDING IN THERE!
IF WE DON'T CATCH OUR TRAITOR GOU GASHA,
WE WON'T BE ABLE TO SHOW OUR FACES IN THE CAPITAL!
N-NO...
IT'S NOT ONLY THAT...
BUT THIS SACRED MOUNTAIN OF YONA-GAHIKO-SAMA CRUMBLES EASILY,
CAPTAIN!
GOOD GRIEF!
CAN'T THEY LEAVE HERE FASTER?
WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO GO ON A SWEEPING SEARCH OF THE MOUN-TAIN!
BY THE WAY, WHO IS THAT OLD MAN?
HE SEEMS TO BE RELATED TO THE MAN THE SOLDIERS ARE LOOKING FOR...
APPARENTLY, HE'S ORIGINALLY A GREAT SCHOLAR.

HE'S JUST HERE TO BE MADE FUN OF BY THE SOLDIERS
HE'S BEEN DRAGGED HERE AND THERE, EVEN TO PLACES LIKE THIS...
WHEN HIS GRANDCHILD BECAME A CRIMINAL WHO REBELLED AGAINST THE CAPITAL,
IT IS THIS MOUN-TAIN...
WHERE IT IS SAID TO BE THE PLACE WHERE MAN FORGED HIS FIRST IRON...
EH?
OLD MAN, DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT?
A LONG TIME AGO AROUND HERE...
THERE EXISTED A PROSPEROUS COUNTRY
mutter
...I REMEMBER HEARING YONAGA-HIKO-SAMA'S NAME BEFORE...
mutter
THE NAME OF THIS MOUNTAIN IS HITETSUZAN, ISN'T IT?

GODS DO NOT EXIST JUST TO BE INCLUDED IN THE "BOOK OF GODS"!
NO... RATHER THAN THAT... THE "BOOK OF GODS" IS...
... BLOOD THAT GAVE BIRTH TO A TRAITOR!
THE...
WHAT NONSENSE ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT...!!
ドン
カリッ
カリッ
カリッ

WE'RE GOING TO THE MOUNTAIN AND DO A SWEEP SEARCH ON THE EASTERN SIDE!
AH...
THEY ARE GOING TO DIE LIKE THIS...
IT'S A MIRACLE THEY'RE STILL ALIVE...
THAT OLD MAN IS HAVING A TERRIBLE FEVER.. WHAT SHALL WE DO?
DIP HIS HEAD IN THE RIVER OR SOMETHING!
IN ANY CASE, I BROUGHT HIM ALONG WITH US TO GIVE GOU GASHA A FAIR WARNING
IT DOESN'T MATTER IF HE TURNS INTO A PRESERVED HEAD
YOU PLEASE DON'T THINK BADLY OF US..
DON'T PUT A CURSE TO THIS AREA..

THANK YOU...
IT'S COOL AND IT FEELS GOOD
... YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME
... AH
IT IS FLOWING FROM YONAGAHIKO-SAMA'S MOUNTAIN.
THIS RIVER...
AFTER ALL...
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HE CAN MOVE...
!
HE IS A FINE MAN
LET'S UNTIE THE ROPE FOR HIM

A RICE BOWL...?
THIS IS SUCH...
...A SMALL RICE BOWL...
COULD IT BE SOME CHILD'S -
PLAY HOUSE TOY...?

IT SMELLS OF BLOOD.

THE PEOPLE AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUN-TAIN...
SHED BLOOD AGAIN THEY NEVER GET TIRED OF IT
HEEEY!
HIKOOO!!

OR, RATHER, FAIRLY...
...TETSU.
YOU'RE SOAKED BADLY AGAIN.
I TOOK A GREAT STEP AND SANK IN TOP SHAPE.
CHALLENGES COME WITH SETBACKS.
SHOW ME "THAT" AGAIN!
HAHAHA!
"THAT" IS FROM WAXED CLOTH SO IT WILL BE ALRIGHT EVEN IF IT'S WET, RIGHT?
YOU DIDN'T CHANGE A BIT.

TETSUICHI HAVEN'T CHANGED SINCE YOUNG.
HMM...
That's rude to me all on... ...aided in that many experiments.
HOHO...
YOU MEAN I GANK SINCE I WAS YOUNG?
WHAT I WANT TO SAY IS YOU'RE THE TYPE WHO NEVER LEARNS
HERE YOU GO

NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU LOOK AT IT...
IT'S A MAP OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD, SO IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO GO TETSU
YOU REALLY LIKE TO LOOK AT MAPS.
YEAH. RELATIVELY
YEAH.
EVEN IF YOU CAN NEVER GO THERE,
TETSU STILL LIKES TO LOOK AT THE MAPS
I... ENJOY LOOKING AT THE SKY, TOO

I ALSO LIKE TO LOOK UP AT THE SKY... SOMETIMES
EVEN IF THERE IS ALMOST ZERO CHANCE TO GO THERE...
EH?!
EVEN THOUGH YOU DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO SHOW ME?!
UMMM...
ALRIGHTY THEN, I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU
BECAUSE I DON'T NEED THAT MAP ANY-MORE

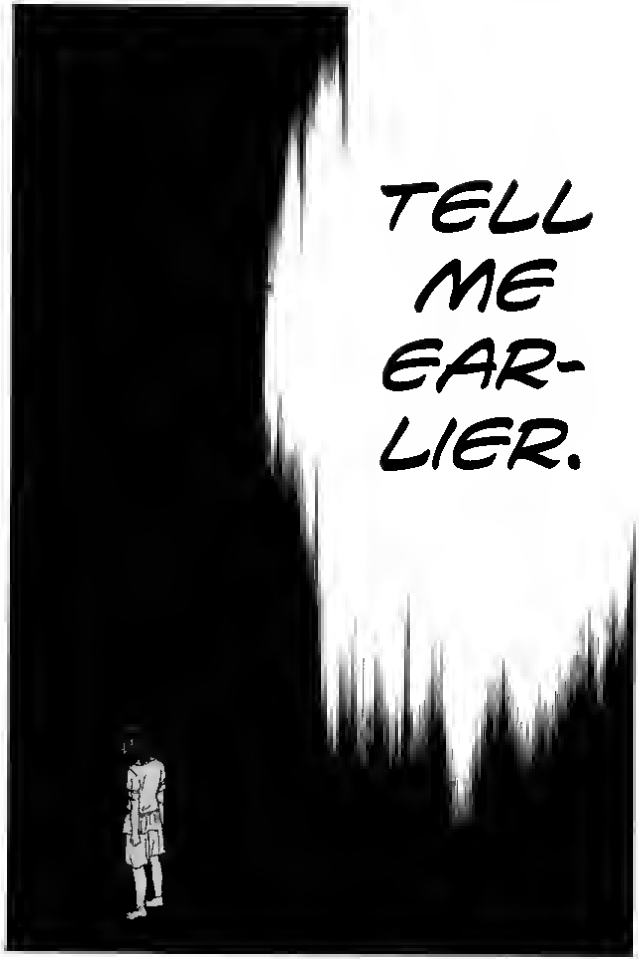
SOMEHOW, TETSUICHI, YOU'RE STEADILY...
IT'S THAT KIND OF FEELING NOW
?
"STEADILY"?
HUH?
I'M STARTING TO YEARN FOR IT.*
* Means he's starting to miss Tetsuichi for some reason, o_o

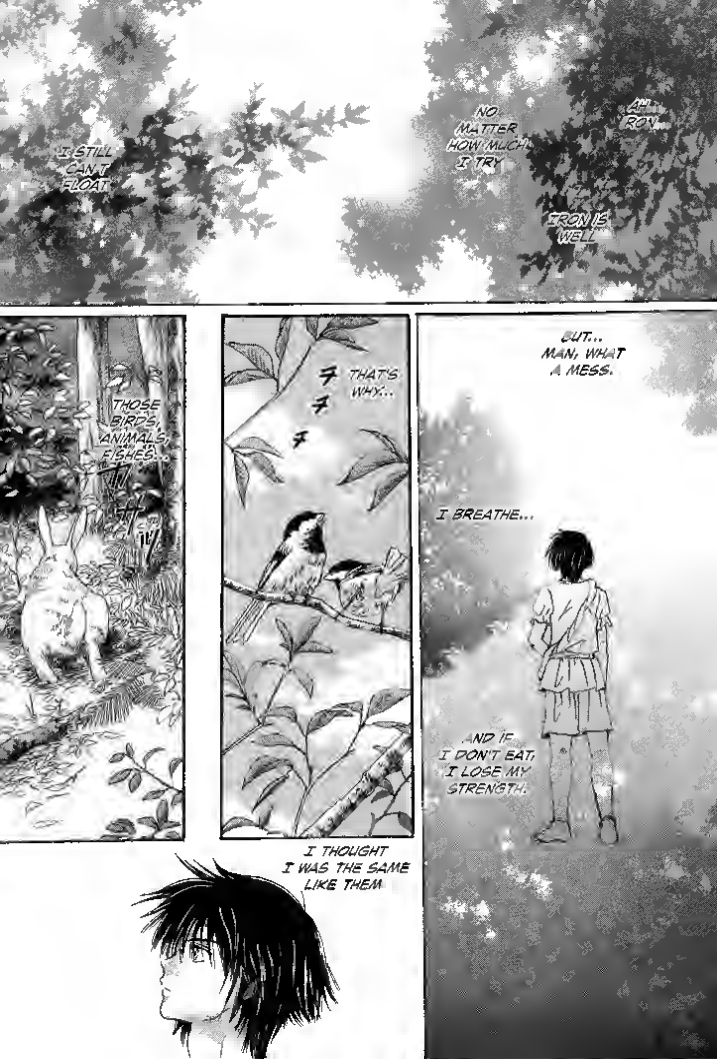
... TETSU
DO YOU WANT TO KNOW THE REASON WHY NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY, YOU CAN'T SWIM?
スイ
IT'S BECAUSE... I'VE DONE SOMETHING BAD TO YOU
IF I TOLD YOU EARLIER, YOU WOULDN'T REPEAT YOUR MEANINGLESS ATTEMPTS
AND WOULD HAVE BEEN SATISFIED WITH JUST THAT...

THAT IS THE REASON WHY..
YOU CAN NEVER FLOAT UNDER WATER
... IRON?
DOLL?
YOU'RE A DOLL MOVED BY THE IRON HEART THAT I MADE
YOUR HEART IS MADE FROM THE VERY FIRST IRON MADE IN THIS MOUNTAIN FROM A LONG TIME AGO
... WHAT...
TETSUICHI IS NOT A LIVING BEING
YOU'RE ARTIFICIAL, YOU'RE SOULLESS
THAT'S RIGHT

AH.
I JUST NOTICED...
HIKO.
UM...
ALTHOUGH I KEPT ON FAILING, I STILL CLUNG TO THE POSSIBILITY, AND I ENJOYED IT
SO YEAH.
I KEPT ON TRYING, THE NEXT DAY, THE DAY AFTER...
IT WAS FUN
RIGHT
SORRY

SO...
FOR REAL?
YEP


TELL
ME
EAR-
LIER.


I STILL CAN'T FLOAT
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I TRY
AH! ROY...
IRON IS WET
THOSE BIRDS, ANIMALS, FISHES...
THAT'S WHY...
I THOUGHT I WAS THE SAME LIKE THEM
BUT... MAN, WHAT A MESS.
I BREATHE...
AND IF I DON'T EAT, I LOSE MY STRENGTH..

A DOLL I MADE.
TETSU IS...
SOMEHOW, BEING NOT ALIVE...
... IS QUITE DISAPPOINTING.
... IS THAT SO.

THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY WAS PEACEFUL AND QUIET.
NOBODY KNOWS OF YET..
ABOUT THE LESSER GOD OF THAT OLD MOUN-TAIN.
IS NOT EVEN KNOWN TO HIMSELF.
THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SMALL HIM...

... WHERE DID THAT OLD MAN GO?!
CAPTAIN, THIS IS
SOMEONE CUT THE ROPE...
I'LL CUT HIS HEAD.
WE DIDN'T KEEP AN EYE ON HIM FOR A WHILE...
NO IT'S THAT

FIND THAT OLD MAN NO MATTER WHAT...!!
CUT OFF THE HEAD OF THE PERSON WHO CUT THE ROPE!
HEY..
HE DOESN'T HAVE TO GO THAT FAR...
EH?!
CAP-TAIN..
THIS ISN'T GOOD... THE LOYALTY OF THE PEOPLE IN THIS VILLAGE TO THE CAPITAL IS LOW...
DON'T LET THEM TAKE YOU LIGHTLY.
IT'S UNDERSTOOD THAT GOU GASHA RAN AWAY IN THIS DIRECTION
IF WE CAN'T RECOVER THE DATA HE RAN AWAY WITH...
OUR HEADS WILL PAY THE PRICE.
... WITH THAT FEL-LOW

I HEARD IT'S SOMETHING REALLY, REALLY BAD...
...I DON'T KNOW THE ALL THE DETAILS BUT..
[illegible] A MESS THIS INCI-DENT TURNED INTO...
IT'S NOT A JOKE...
HEY!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO IF THE PUNISHMENT FALL UPON US, TOO?
HEY, HEY, BE CAREFUL ON WHAT YOU WISH FOR...
IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR US IF THEY'D JUST RECEIVE THE PUNISH-MENT FROM THE SACRED MOUNTAIN!

HE KILLED A GOD, AND THEN TOOK THE THRONE
IT IS SAID, A LONG TIME AGO
YONA-GAHIKO-SAMA IS VERY SCARY
HOWEVER IT IS SAID HE NEVER STOOD BY US HUMANS
.. BUT HE... CAN ALSO BE QUIET AND GENTLE, TOO..
HE'S BECOM-ING.. WISER.

TETSUICHI IS BECOMING SMARTER AND STRONGER AT A VERY FAST RATE
EVERY DAY..
HE IS SLOWLY RESEMBLING "THAT PERSON" MORE..
THAT PERSON...
IN OTHER WORDS, IF I LEAVE HIM ALONE EVEN FOR JUST A LITTLE WHILE...
... HOW TROUBLE-SOME.
.....

IT'D BE DIFFICULT FOR ME TO CONTROL HIM..
WHAT DOES "NOT A LIVING BEING"...
MEAN!?

... IS NOT LIVING BEING.
Dialogue meandering thicker
Halfway up the sleeves, threads unraveled
TETSUICHI...
ARE YOU SAYING I'M NOT ALIVE?!
I DON'T HAVE A LIFE?
I DON'T UNDER-STAND...
WHAT IT MEANS ...
I'M NOT ALIVE?
JUST THAT, IT SOMEHOW... FEELS KINDA LONELY
YEAH, THAT'S IT
YEP.

THEN AGAIN...
THE GOD YONAGAHIKO TALKED ABOUT MIGHT BE THE SAME AS WELL... BUT...
BIRDS... FISHES... THEY'RE ALL LIVING BEINGS... BUT.. I'M NOT?
I'M NOT ALIVE...?
AH...
WITH-OUT NOTICING ...
I'M ALREADY AT THE END OF THE MOUN-TAIN...
ゴオ
オオオ

ゴオオオ
BEYOND THIS POINT...
... IS A PLACE I'VE BEEN FORBIDDEN TO GO FOR A LONG TIME
SOME HOW...
THERE S SOMETHING.
... IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WATER FALL..?
IT LOOKS LIKE.
A DOOR
トゥ
トゥ
トゥ

TETSUICHI...
CAN'T GET OUT FROM THIS MOUNTAIN
BEYOND THIS POINT..
IS A PLACE I CAN'T GO RIGHT?
NO!
WAIT!
WAIT, WAIT, I GOT IT
I GOT IT, HIKO ME TOO!
THERE ARE JUST THINGS THAT WE CAN'T DO IN THIS WORLD!
THAT'S RIGHT!

BUT DON'T YOU THINK IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO PERSISTENTLY CHALLENGE SOMETHING THAN TO JUST LIVE?
ぶんっ
ぶんっ
ぶんっ
ALTHOUGH... I DON'T EXACTLY HAVE A LIFE...
BUT, HIKO_
IT'S THAT...
TO TRY SOMETHING NEW IS_
LOOK!
IT'S THIS EASY!
フオオオ

IF I LOOK AT IT FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE...
IF I'M NOT ALIVE, I CAN'T DIE, RIGHT?
Even if I do, that's for real?
I WONDER WHY...
WHY DO I...
OH?
ALWAYS WANT TO DO THE THINGS I CAN'T DO?
THAT'S A LOAD OF BULL, BUT...

EH?
WHY DOES IT FEEL LIKE I JUST PASSED THROUGH SOMETHING?
!!
AH... IT HURTS...
IT HURTS!

Ah...
IT BURNS!!
IT FEELS LIKE THERE'S A LUMP OF FIRE INSIDE ME...!!
MELT... ING...
THIS ISN'T GOOD. IS THIS THE HEART...?
THAT MELTING LUMP IS MY HEART...?

ｱｱｱｱ

HELLO? ANY-BODY?
HIKO?!
HMM...
IT SEEMS I'VE GOTTEN OUT SOME-HOW...
HU..
HUH?
WHAT IS...
WHAT IS THIS ... SMELL?
HUH?
JUST NOW...
WHAT WAS IT?
INSIDE MY CHEST...

I KNOW IT VERY WELL...
THIS SMELL...
ボタッ

AH...
THIS...
BLOOD...
THE SMELL OF IRON

EH?!
UMM.?
U..
HEY...
EXCUSE ME...
BUT, WHO ARE YOU? WHAT? HEY...
EH? ISN'T THIS THE RICE BOWL THAT SLIPPED FROM MY HAND AND FLOWED INTO THE RIVER THREE DAYS AGO?

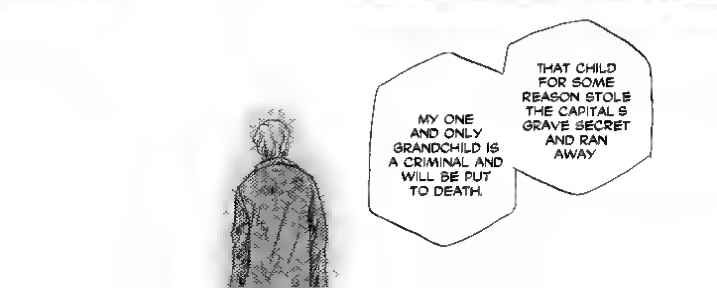
CAPTAIN!
IT'S REALLY BAD TO GO ANY FURTHER!
HAVE YOU FOUND HIM YET?!
NO... NOT YET..
WHAT IS THAT?
I'VE SEEN SIMILAR THINGS LIKE THAT SEVERAL TIMES A WHILE AGO, TOO
THE OLD SAYING SAYS THAT THIS MOUNTAIN OF YONAGAHIKO-SAMA COLLAPSES EASILY!
NOW, IT'S ALL JUST HEAPS GATHERED TOGETHER.
THERE IS A PATH WHERE PEOPLE CAN GO THROUGH.
AROUND HERE...
WHEN WE EXTRACT IRON, SOMETIMES THERE WOULD BE REMNANTS LYING AROUND. WE DON'T USUALLY USE THEM, THOUGH...
THAT IS

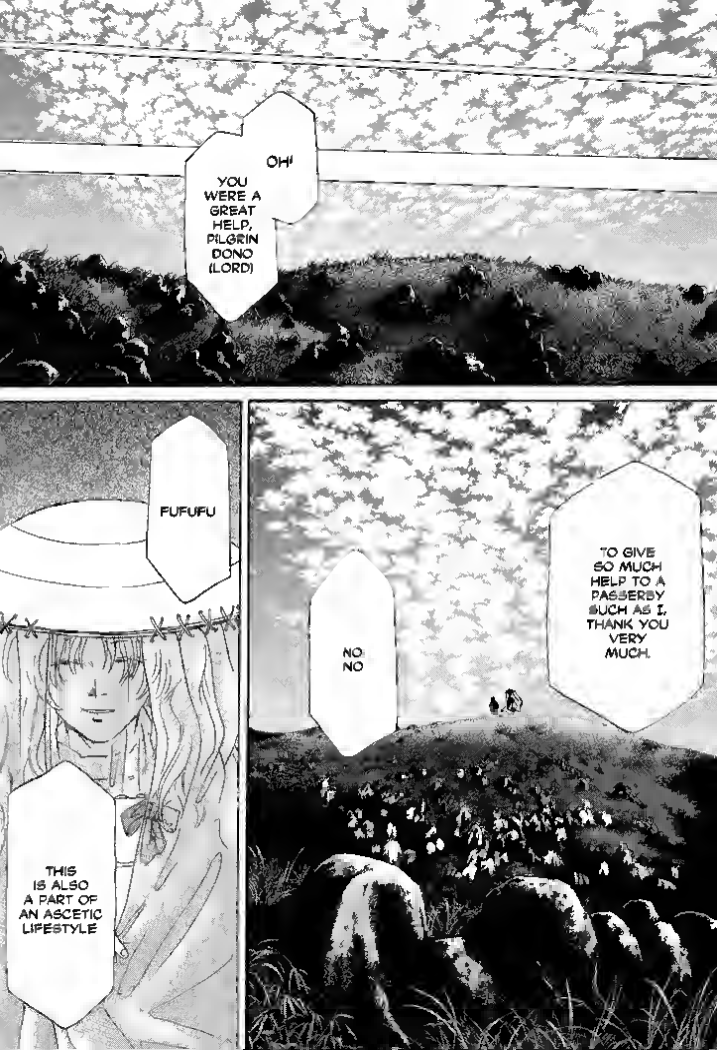
H-HEY...
LISTEN TO WHAT OTHERS ARE SAY-ING!
IN THAT CASE THE CRIMINALS CAN ALSO PASS THROUGH!
I'M SURPRISED, TOO.
I'M...
SURPRISED...
ONLY HIKO IS THAT BIG!!
I THOUGHT
HEEEY!
I DIDN'T EXPECT
TO BE ABLE TO MEET WITH A GOD...

Could it be that I'm super small?!
Um...
TO THINK THAT...
HUMANS ARE NORMALLY IN THIS SIZE..
Human
Me
HEY, WHAT WERE YOU DOING ALL COVERED UP IN BLOOD LIKE THAT?
HUMANS PROBABLY CAN'T GO FURTHER BEYOND THIS POINT.
I... CAME HERE TO LOOK FOR MY GRAND-CHILD.
OR SO I SAY... BUT WHETHER OR NOT HE REALLY IS IN THIS MOUNTAIN -
I DON'T KNOW..

A PERSON FROM FAR AWAY?!
Wow!
SO THAT GRANDCHILD PERSON ISN'T ACTUALLY LOST?
BOTH ME AND MY GRAND-CHILD
UNTIL SOME TIME AGO WE'VE BEEN WORKING IN THE ACADEMY IN THE EMPEROR'S PALACE AT THE CAPITAL
HALF OF THE COUNTRIES INDICATED THERE NO LONGER EXIST
HUH?!
Is that so?!
...
ガサガサ
THE CAPITAL...
Where could it be?!
HMM
...THIS IS QUITE AN OLD MAP

MY DAUGHTER AND HER HUSBAND WERE SCHOLARS AS WELL
I WAS A SCHOLAR
MY GRANDCHILD WAS ONE TOO
I'M
WHEN HE WAS TWELVE HE STARTED WORKING WITH THE GROWNUPS
HE ENTERED THE ACADEMY WHEN HE WAS ONLY SIX YEARS OLD
ESPECIALLY THAT GRAND-CHILD OF MINE HE IS VERY TALENTED
BUT EVEN SO I'VE NEVER TALKED TO HIM FACE TO FACE...
VERY PROUD OF THAT GRAND-CHILD


MY ONE AND ONLY GRANDCHILD IS A CRIMINAL AND WILL BE PUT TO DEATH.
THAT CHILD FOR SOME REASON STOLE THE CAPITAL'S GRAVE SECRET AND RAN AWAY


OH!
YOU WERE A GREAT HELP, PILGRIM DONO (LORD)
FUFUFU
THIS IS ALSO A PART OF AN ASCETIC LIFESTYLE
NO NO
"TO GIVE SO MUCH HELP TO A PASSERBY SUCH AS I, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

I WAS TROUBLED AS ALL MY BELONGINGS WERE ROBBED FROM ME
YOU REALLY SAVED ME
THAT SOUNDS TERRIBLE
BUT LIFE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING ELSE
FUFUFU.
YES.
WELL...
HAHA.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING FROM HERE?
BEYOND THIS POINT IT IS HIGHLY DANGEROUS.
HAHAHA.

I'VE BEEN WALKING AROUND.
"WHERE", EH...
THE GOD-SLAYING MOUNTAIN, HUH...
"THE MOUNTAIN OF THE GOD KILLER".
UUUM?
?
?

IT'S AN ABSURD STORY, HUH?
TELLING SUCH A STORY TO A GOD...
I WOULD NEVER HAVE IMAGINED IT...
... BUT I SAW NOTHING BUT MY CHILD'S ABILITY.

IT WAS THEN THAT I REALIZED THAT I DON'T KNOW THE FACE OF MY GRANDCHILD WHO HAS ALREADY GROWN UP...
IT WAS THEN.
WHEN I FIRST HEARD FROM A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL THAT MY GRANDCHILD HAD COMMITTED A GRAVE CRIME...
EXCEPT FOR A SMALL SMILING FACE
NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY I COULDN'T REMEMBER
I WANT TO MEET HIM.
AT THE VERY LEAST I WANT TO SEE HIM FACE TO FACE

BY THE WAY
IS IT ALRIGHT NOT TO REPORT THE ATTACK BY THOSE THIEVES TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS?
ギクッ
EH?
OH, UH THAT IS RIGHT..
W-
WHAT IS IT?!
HMM.
DO YOU WANT TO TRAVEL TOGETHER?
YOU DON'T WANT A TRAVELING COMPANION?
HUH?

HM. WELL ARE WE GOING TOWARDS THE SAME DIRECTION?
EVEN IF YOU CALL ME YOUR TRAVELING COMPANION.
WHERE ARE YOU HEADING PILGRIM-DONO?
BE IT ANY-WHERE AS LONG AS IT'S A PLACE WHERE IT'S CON-VENIENT FOR US BOTH
FUFU
SURELY NOT TO GO TOGETHER AND CHAT ALL THE WAY.
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A DANGEROUS TIME?

DON'T YOU THINK THAT FATE BROUGHT US TO MEET EACH OTHER?
!
AND ALSO, I CAN'T JUST LEAVE SOMEONE WHO GOT ATTACKED BY A THIEF ALONE ON HIS OWN.
I'M CONFIDENT OF MY SKILLS...
FUFUFU
IT CAN'T BE... A CRIMINAL PURSUER...
IT'S MY MISSION TO HELP OUT ALL PEOPLE IN NEED
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
FOR MANY YEARS I'VE DONE NOTHING BUT PRACTICE ASCETICISM IN THE SHRINE THAT EXPLAINS MY IGNORANCE OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD
BUT THEN AGAIN, I DON'T THINK THEY'LL USE SUCH A SLOW APPROACHING METHOD...
...HUH.
WHAT'S UP WITH THIS PERSON

10
FU..
WE BETTER GET GOING, DUSK IS APPROACHING..
BY THE WAY,
THE WIND IS RISING
UMM..
BUT..
TSK. IT'S REALLY HARD TO TELL...
IF I REFUSE, IT WOULD SEEM STRANGE...
PLEASE?
I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO TRAVELLERS.
IS HE REALLY AN ASCETIC PRACTICING BUDDHIST MONK WHO DOESN'T KNOW SHIT ABOUT THE WORLD?
OR, IS HE A...?
Being attacked by thieves was a lie...
I was just out of cash...

HMM?
Y-
YOU..! THAT HAIR COLOR..!
AHH.
YES, YES.
A SA.. SA..
A SAKURA COLOR?!

ケラ ケラ ケラ
HOW CAN THAT BE!
EH?!
ARE YOU... A "CELESTIAL BEING"?!
THIS HAIR IS JUST FROM CELESTIAL ATAVISM.
CELESTIAL BEINGS WON'T JUST APPEAR THAT OFTEN, WILL THEY?
I AM.
CALLED "SAKURA" BECAUSE OF THIS HAIR COLOR
NICE TO MEET YOU
NO.. CELESTIAL ATAVISM MIGHT NOT BE RARE, BUT..
IN THE SHRINE WHERE I STAYED, THERE ARE ALSO QUITE A FEW LIKE ME
THEIR EYES ARE LIKE THAT TOO SO ARE THEIR HAIRS

WELL... "CELESTIAL ATAVISM" DOES APPEAR EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, BUT...
AH.
NICE TO MEET YOU TOO.
LIGHT SAKURA-COLORED HAIR...
PALE MAUVE EYES...
AND...
IT'S WEIRD, ISN'T IT?
ALTHOUGH I GREW UP IN THE SHRINE, I'M JUST A WOOD-CUTTER'S SON
USUALLY, THE SO-CALLED "TENJIN GAERI"
APPEARS EASILY NOT IN THE GREAT AND MIGHTY NOBLES BUT IN PEOPLE WITH LOW SOCIAL STATUS LIKE ME

BY THE WAY, WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
AHH..
WELL, IN A NUTSHELL, I GUESS..
HE IS REALLY A BOY..
AND, UMM...
GOU!... NO, NO.
MY NAME IS YOU
I JUST STARTED HELPING MY PARENTS WITH BUSI-NESS
THE POSSIBILITY OF HIM BEING A PURSUER IS GONE, I GUESS...
WHO WILL HIRE SOMEONE SO NOTICEABLE FOR THIS JOB?
HMM.. IT JUST MIGHT BE ABLE TO..
IF THE TWO OF US TRAVEL TOGETHER, WILL IT BE ABLE TO DIVERT THE ATTENTION OF THE PURSUERS?

But then...!
WHAT KIND OF TRADE DO YOU DO, YOU-SAN?
IT S AN ABAN-DONED HOUSE

.. DEAR LITTLE GOD
I'M BEING CHASED BY SOLDIERS
PLEASE LEAVE ME BE
THEY WILL DEFINITELY SEND PEOPLE FAR MORE SCARIER TO THIS PLACE
IF THEY FIND OUT THAT THERE'S A GOD IN THIS MOUNTAIN THAT IS NOT LISTED IN THE "BOOK OF GODS"..
AND IF POSSIBLE, RUN AWAY AS FAR AS YOU CAN

?
HUH?
... I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS MYSELF, BUT...
WHEN I WAS INVESTIGATING USING MY GRANDCHILD'S POSITION.
SEEMS THAT MY GRAND-CHILD...
RESEARCH-ING ON HOW TO IMPURE A GOD'S HEART INTO SOMETHING BAD
?
HUH?
EVEN WITHOUT THAT, IN THIS MOUN-TAIN
THERE LINGERS A LEGEND THAT SAYS A GOD WAS SLAIN BY A HUMAN

THAT'S
GOD IS LIFE
NOT TRUE.
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS NOT HAVING LIFE IN YOU
IT SEEMS THAT MY GRAND-CHILD IS VERY INTER-ESTED IN THIS PLACE.
THAT IS THE REASON WHY WE CAME HERE.
A HUMAN?
A GOD SLAIN BY...
BUT... I DON'T HAVE A LIFE
BUT WE CAN'T DIE RIGHT?
I'M NOT EVEN A LIVING BEING.
HIKO AND ME WE'RE THE SO-CALLED GODS
HOW DO YOU KILL SOME-ONE LIKE THAT?

BEFORE HUMANS AND BEASTS EXISTED, THIS WORLD WAS BRIMMING WITH LIFE.
WHICH WE NAMED GODS AND WE WERE SUPPOSED TO LIVE IN HARMONY.

?
THAT...
NO...
THAT...
I NEVER THOUGHT... THAT I'D BE ABLE TO MEET A GOD SUCH AS YOU.
I THANK YOU.
U...
UM!
WHY DID YOU COME TO RETURN MY RICE BOWL
IN SUCH A TERRIBLE TIME?
THAT...
I'M HAVING A HARD TIME UNDER-STANDING WHAT YOU'VE SAID

I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS...
SOME SORT OF TOY
AND THAT SOMEWHERE A CHILD WAS CRYING
I'M
ASHAMED
MY ONLY DAUGHTER, AND YET...
I COULD ONLY REMEMBER WHO SHE LOOKED WHEN SHE WAS A CHILD
サッ
サッ

HEY!!
THERE HE IS!!
I SEE HIM!!
?
AH. SOMEONE IS HERE. THEY'RE HUMANS.
ARE THEY THE ONES CHASING AFTER YOU?
PLEASE, RUN AWAY QUICKLY.
THEY WOULD BE SURPRISED IF THEY SEE YOU
YOU ARE SMALL.
IF YOU LEAVE THIS PLACE QUICKLY, THEY WON'T NOTICE.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE BIG, OLD MAN..

GASHA..
I CAN'T..
MEET YOU..
EH?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WE'VE KILLED HIM!
OVER HERE!
IS GOU GASHA THERE?
SEARCH FOR HIM!!

!?
EH?!
WHAT'S UP WITH THIS KID?!
AH...
I KNOW...
THIS SMELL...

IRON...
THE SMELL OF...
NO, IT'S AN EVIL SPIRIT!
YOU...
GO...
GOD?!
NOW...
HE'S DEAD...?

A LIVING BEING IS...
DEAD?!
THE SMELL OF IRON...
THE SUN HAS COMPLETELY SET...
AH...

I'M PLANNING TO WALK ALL NIGHT, HOW ABOUT YOU?
AH, SAKURA-DONO!
PIL..!
SAKURA-DONO?
FROM YONAGA-HIKO-SAMA'S MOUN-TAIN!
SOME-THING
RED IS...?!
HEY!
WHAT IS THAT?

!!
MY... POWER IS...?!
BRO-THER?!
IT'S BEING DRAWN OUT?!

BROTHER ...?!
TETSUICHI?!

Ahh
I REMEMBER
A BIT...

IT'S IRON.
THE HEAT WHEN I PASSED THROUGH THAT DOOR...
INSIDE THIS BODY...
"THE IRON I CREATED."
BUT I...
EH?
EH?

SAKURA-DONO?
... NO.
I'LL WALK, TOO.
IT SEEMS TO BE STILL FAR AWAY.
?
EH...?

THE MOUN-TAIN FURTHER AHEAD
WHAT'S IT CALLED?

MANY LIVING BEINGS...
HAVE DIED.

UM...
AH...
HMM...
HE SAID THAT
HE RESTED HERE

EVEN THOUGH HE WAS LIVING...

OLD MAN
THIS—
GIVE IT TO YOUR DAUGHTER

TETSUICHI

YO!
AH, IT SEEMS LIKE MY FEET HAVE BEEN HURTING RECENTLY
I WONDER WHY THOUGH. OH, WHAT'S THAT?
WHOA!
WHOA!
OUCH!
AH, BUT..
YEAH!
I WONDER IF I'M SUITED TO DOING THIS KIND OF THING
THE PLAN IS ALL SET TOO!
AN IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF

OW OW OW OW OW!
WHAT'S THIS THING STICKING OUT OF MY FOOT?
HIKO SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW EITHER...
OOF! UP WE GO!
BUT...
SHOULD I GO AND TALK TO HIM AGAIN?
I HAVE A HUNCH HE'LL GET ANGRY.
BUT YOU KNOW,
THAT HIKO...
HE'LL PROBABLY REALIZE IN AN INSTANT WHAT I'M DOING OUT HERE.
IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE ANY PARTICULAR REAL SERIOUS REASON FOR GOING...

I GUESS I'LL GO BACK AFTER I FINISH THIS.
MMM, GOING BACK... WELL,
COMING BACK AT ALL!
HE'S NOT

SHOULD I SEE THIS AS HIM RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME?!
DON'T TELL ME HE RAN AWAY?!
THE FACT THAT HE HAS STAYED AWAY FROM THE SANCTUARY FOR SO LONG WITHOUT RETURNING...
THERE'S ANY DEEP MEANING BEHIND THIS, HIKO!
IT'S NOT AS IF
BUT I WANT TO STAY OUTSIDE
. I WANT TO BE ALONE

SO FLASHY!
...FL—
JUST WHO IS THIS GUY?!
HE STANDS OUT ENOUGH WITHOUT IT.
YES YES OF COURSE
I'LL BLESS YOU AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE
IF YOU'RE FINE WITH SOMEONE WHO'S STILL IN TRAINING, THEN PLEASE COME
YOU CAN BE AS CHARITABLE AS YOU LIKE

FOR THOSE AILING FROM ILLNESS YOU MAY SCRATCH THE AREA WITH THE BRANCH.
THESE BRANCHES HAVE BEEN PURIFIED BY THE SUBSTITUTE PILGRIM ALONG SIDE THE HIGHWAY
THOSE WHO WISH TO BE BLESSED SHOULD HOLD THEIR BREATH WHILE OFFERING UP THEIR PRAYERS
M...
OH, YOU-SAN.
ME, TOO.
PLEASE HELP HAND OUT NEW BRANCHES TO EVERY-ONE.
I WANT ONE, TOO!
HERE
MY LITTLE BROTHER JUST FELL OVER
YOU GUYS... INSTEAD OF HAVING A SMALL WOUND LIKE THAT BLESSED BY HIM, YOU SHOULD ASK HIM TO MAKE YOU A BIT SMARTER
THAT'S RIGHT!
Shut up!

フワッ

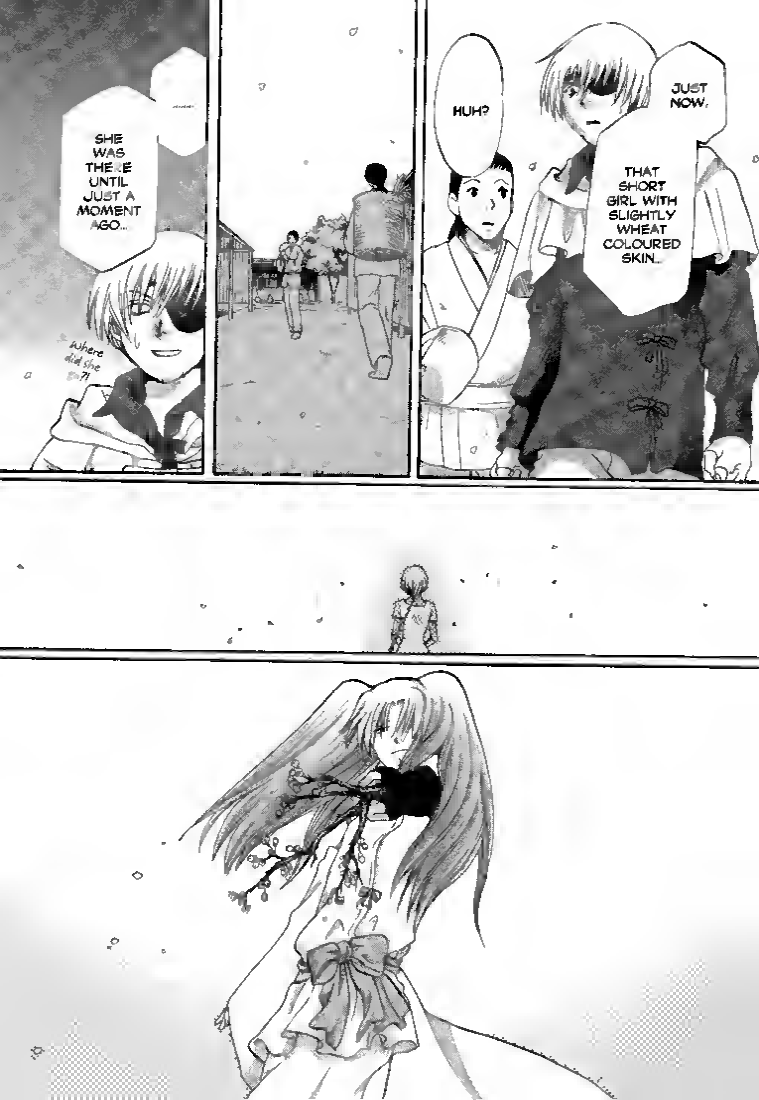
AH!
AMAZING!!
IT HEALED!

THE HEAD'S BROTHER IS PRETTY BEAUTIFUL, TOO.
HE LOOKS JUST LIKE A CUTE GIRL!
I HEARD HE'S A PILGRIM WHO IS SOON BECOMING A SAINT!
ISN'T THAT JUST INCREDIBLE?
BUT EVEN IF YOU CAN'T SEE IT, GOD'S BLESSING WILL GRANT GOOD POWER TO ANYONE.
CHILDREN HAVE STRONG HEALING POWERS, SO THE HEALING IS MUCH MORE VISIBLE.
ALL I DID WAS HELP SPEED UP THE PROCESS.
IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN AN INCREDIBLE HAIR COLOR LIKE THAT. THAT'S DEFINITELY SOMEONE WHO IS A SAINT.
I'LL GET BLESSED TOO.
I THINK I'LL BRING ALONG MY GRANDPA!

IT'S A METHOD OF TREATMENT INVOLVING CONTAGIOUS MAGIC.
SYNCHRONIZING THE SAKURA BRANCH WITH THE HUMAN BODY.
AND THEN BY LETTING POWER FLOW INTO THE BRANCH, IT REJUVENATES THE BODY.
NOT TO MENTION, HE GETS SOME OF THE POWER HE PUT INTO THE BRANCH BACK.
WHICH MEANS HE CAN USE IT AS MANY TIMES AS HE WANTS.
IN TERMS OF THE ACTUAL SPELL, THERE'S NOTHING REALLY PARTICULARLY SPECIAL ABOUT IT, BUT.
FOR A BEGINNER WHO'S AT MOST 15-16 YEARS OLD, HE MUST HAVE GONE THROUGH A LOT.
DIRECTLY TOUCHING THE PATIENT IS THE STANDARD AND EFFECTIVE WAY TO DO IT, BUT.
IN TERMS OF SHOWING OFF, DOING IT THIS WAY IS MORE FLAMBOYANT.
THAT'S A CLEVER WAY TO DO IT.

HE REALLY IS AMA-ZING.
PILGRIMS CLAIMING TO HAVE SEEN A CELESTIAL BEING AND GIVING OUT BLESSINGS ARE USUALLY JUST SCAMS.
EVEN IN THE CAPITAL, THERE ARE ONLY A HANDFUL OF THEM WHO ARE REALLY GENUINE.
IN A ROADSIDE MARKET LIKE THIS, THEY CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FAKE AND A REAL ONE ANYWAY, BUT...
AS IT TURNS OUT, THIS IS...

I got caught up staring at her...
WHO'S THAT?
SHE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE SHE'S FROM THIS AREA I WONDER WHERE SHE IS FROM?
EH?
WHICH GIRL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
.....
WHAT A CUTE GIRL...


JUST NOW.
THAT SHORT GIRL WITH SLIGHTLY WHEAT COLOURED SKIN..
HUH?
SHE WAS THERE UNTIL JUST A MOMENT AGO..
Where did she go?

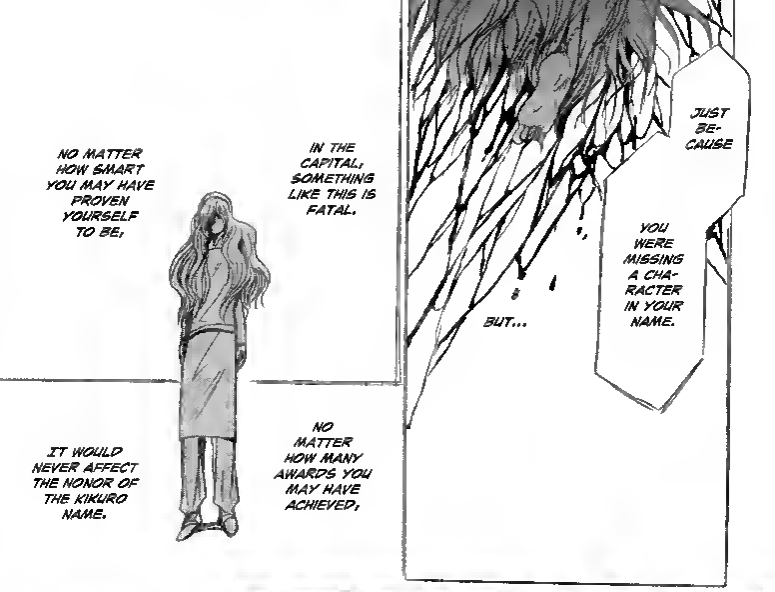
TO BE ABLE TO BE IN SUCH A WONDERFUL LODGING...
AND TO RECEIVE SUCH A WONDERFUL GOODWILL...
TRULY, I THANK YOU!
...FOR NOW, I FULLY UNDERSTAND JUST HOW RESOURCE-FUL YOU ARE

WHAT'S WRONG?
NO, IT'S NOTHING
THE MEDICINE SHOULD BE REACHING ITS LIMIT SOON.
スッキッ
HOW MUCH LONGER CAN THE MEDICINE CONTAIN IT...
...BEFORE THE INSIDES OF MY HEAD ROT AND MELT AWAY?
AND, ACCORDING TO THE RUMORS AT THE MARKET,
THE CAPITAL HAS ALREADY SENT PEOPLE HERE, TOO.
EITHER WAY, HAVING ALREADY COME THIS FAR, I'M GOING TO FIND A CLUE EVEN IF IT MEANS I'M CLUTCHING AT STRAWS

I'M GOING TO TAKE A BATH. YOU STAY HERE AND REST.
OR SO IT WOULD SEEM.
APPARENTLY, A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE GONE MISSING IN THE NEARBY MOUNTAIN.
OUR PRIEST IS CURRENTLY HELPING WITH THE SEARCH.
THIS PLACE IS SHORT OF PEOPLE, SO, I'VE BEEN INFORMED THAT AS LONG AS YOU HELP WITH THE CHORES, YOU CAN STAY FOR AS LONG AS YOU'D LIKE.
...THAT'S THE ONLY NEWS I'M GRATEFUL FOR.
I'M LUCKY THAT THEY HAVEN'T HANDED OUT MY PROFILE YET.
THERE'S NO MISTAKING IT. IT'S THE PURSUERS.
THOSE WHO HAVE TOUCHED UPON THE "WRATH OF GOD" HAVE COME FROM THE CAPITAL.
*HITETSU = FIRE IRON
IF THAT STORY ABOUT THE WRATH OF GOD IS TRUE, THEN THE GOD OF THAT MOUNTAIN, YONGAHIKO, IS ALIVE.
...HITETSU, THE GOD-SLAYING MOUNTAIN.

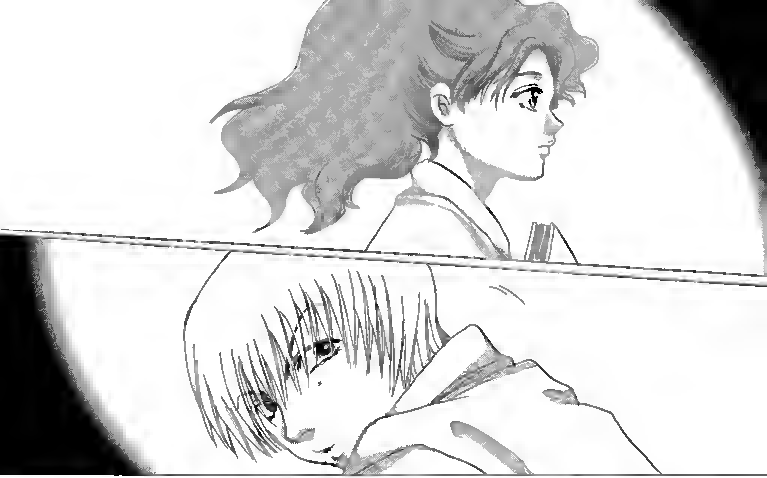
KIKURO!
...KIKURO!
KIKURO!
HANG IN THERE!
DON'T TOUCH ME.
...STOP.
...GOU...
THIS IS THE END OF ME.
ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS WATCH YOUR EYES.

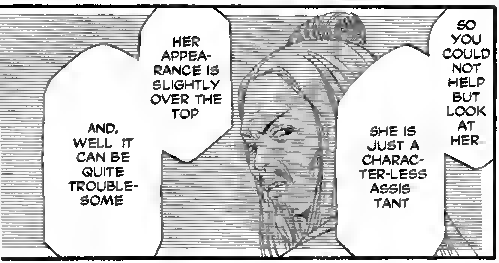
...OF COURSE, KIKURO.
THERE'S NO WAY YOU WOULD HATE ME FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
YOU WERE... ALWAYS BETTER THAN I WAS.
BUT WHAT I HATED WASN'T YOUR BRAINS OR YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS.
I HATED YOU
KIKURO...
THAT IS MY LAST CONFESSION
IT WAS MY PRIDE AND STUBBORNESS.
BUT...
YOU WERE... JUST...
JUST DIFFERENT TO ME.


NO MATTER HOW SMART YOU MAY HAVE PROVEN YOURSELF TO BE,
IN THE CAPITAL, SOMETHING LIKE THIS IS FATAL.
IT WOULD NEVER AFFECT THE NONOR OF THE KIKURO NAME.
NO MATTER HOW MANY AWARDS YOU MAY HAVE ACHIEVED,
BUT...
JUST BE-CAUSE
YOU WERE MISSING A CHA-RACTER IN YOUR NAME.

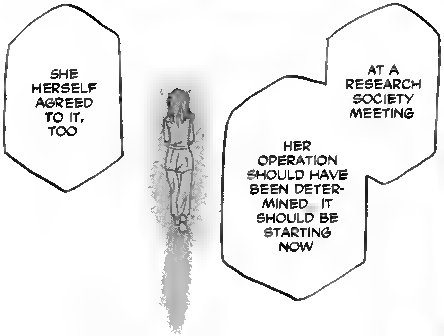
TAKING OVER THE RESEARCH IN THE STEAD OF INCOMPETENT PEOPLE WHO HAPPEN TO CARRY IMPORTANT NAMES...
REPEATING EXPERIMENTS FROM DUSK UNTIL DAWN.
BEING WORKED LIKE A SLAVE FOR A MEAGER SALARY.
*キクロ - THIS IS WRITTEN IN KATAKANA, RELEVANT FOR YOUR UNDERSTANDING.
SOMEONE OF LOW BIRTH LIKE HIM WOULD NEVER BE REWARDED.
A NAME THAT DOES NOT CONTAIN A SINGLE CHARACTER.
KIKURO?

EVEN SOMEONE WHO WAS BORN OF THE PRESTIGIOUS ACADEMIC GOU FAMILY WAS OFTEN TALKED ABOUT.
GOU GASHA*
I SEE THERE'S A CHARACTER MISSING ISN'T THERE.
YOUR GRANDFATHER'S OBSESSION WITH A VERITABLE ABILITY SURE IS TROUBLESOME
WHAT A WASTE EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE BORN IN THE PRESTIGIOUS GOU FAMILY TO HAVE A CHARACTER MISSING...
*First two characters = Gougeki, kyō akuma = Sky
EVEN THOUGH YOU ARE TALENTED, FOR SOMEONE WITH A CHARACTER MISSING TO BE ABLE TO MARRY A LADY...
WELL, I GUESS YOU DO HAVE TWO CHARACTERS LEFT.
I PASSED BY KIKURO.
HA HA...
LIKE I CARE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS SO FAR IN THE FUTURE AND FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN HIT IN THE HEAD WITH A POISONED ARROW!!
YOU'VE GOT TO ACCEPT THE MARRIAGE WITH THE WONDERFUL CHARACTER-POSSESSING LADY.
THERE'S NO GOING BACK FOR YOU



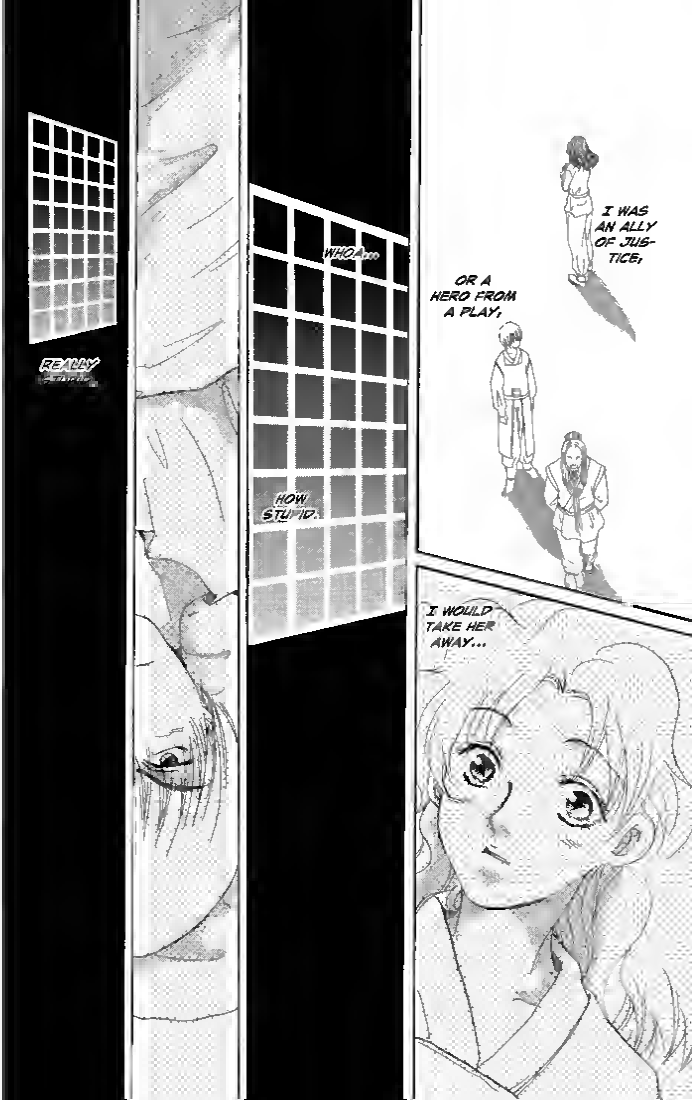

SO YOU COULD NOT HELP BUT LOOK AT HER.
SHE IS JUST A CHARAC-TER-LESS ASSIS TANT
HER APPEA-RANCE IS SLIGHTLY OVER THE TOP
AND, WELL IT CAN BE QUITE TROUBLE-SOME

I'LL BE FRANK.
I DO LIKE CUTE GIRLS.
YES
THAT PERSON. JUST NOW.
IS SHE FROM THE SAME RE-SEARCH BUILDING AS US?


SHE HERSELF AGREED TO IT, TOO
AT A RESEARCH SOCIETY MEETING
HER OPERATION SHOULD HAVE BEEN DETER-MINED. IT SHOULD BE STARTING NOW

OPERATION?
AFTER IT, SHE WON'T BE A GIRL ANYMORE.
FOR THOSE WHO WORK IN BUSY PLACES, IT'S NOT THAT RARE OF AN OCCURANCE.
WHETHER YOU'RE MALE OR FEMALE,
...I'VE HEARD OF THINGS LIKE THIS.
IN THE END, I'M STILL THE SON OF THE GOU FAMILY. SO..
EVEN IF SOMETHING HAPPENS, WHICH GENERATES GOSSIP ABOUT ME MISSING A CHARACTER IN MY NAME,
BUT...

THAT NIGHT,
IT'S JUST A GIRL I PASSED BY.
SHE WAS A BIT CUTE, NOTHING MORE.
I COULDN'T GET TO SLEEP.
IT'S SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS OFTEN IN SOCIETY.
I'M TOO SOFT-HEARTED...
WHY IS IT SO HARD TO GO TO SLEEP?
OF COURSE,
THE THOUGHT OF IT MAKES ME SICK, BUT...
IF...

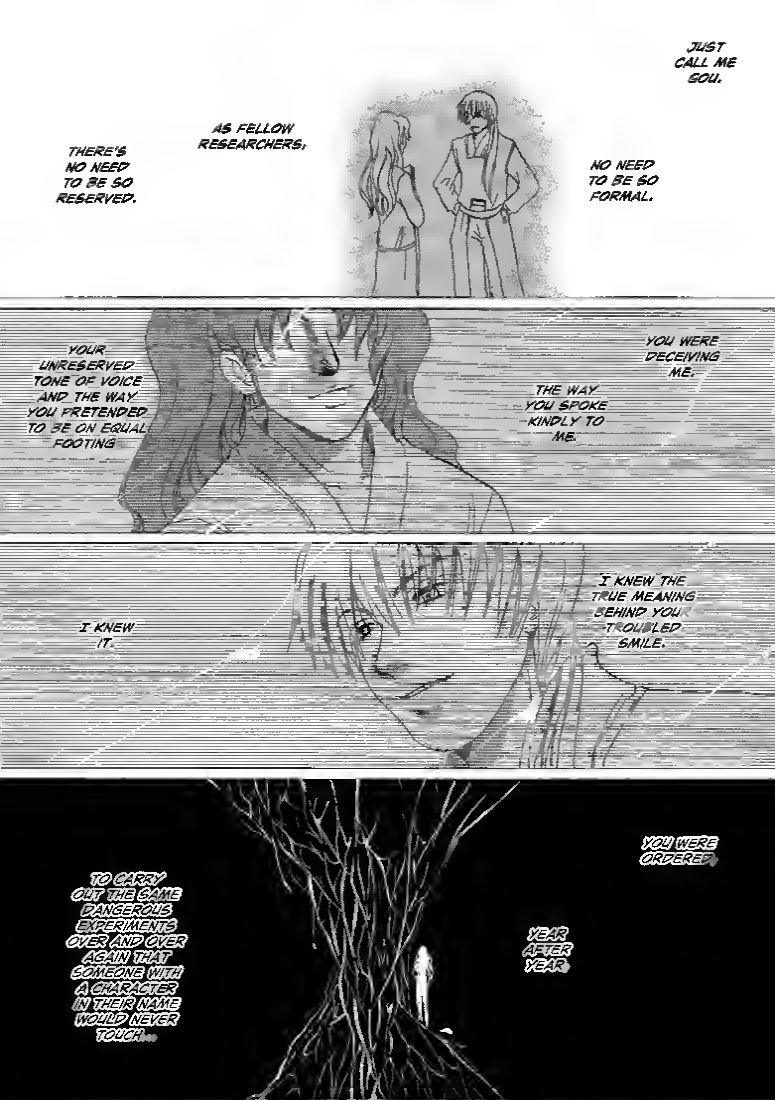

REALLY
WHO...
HOW STUPID.
I WAS AN ALLY OF JUSTICE,
OR A HERO FROM A PLAY,
I WOULD TAKE HER AWAY...

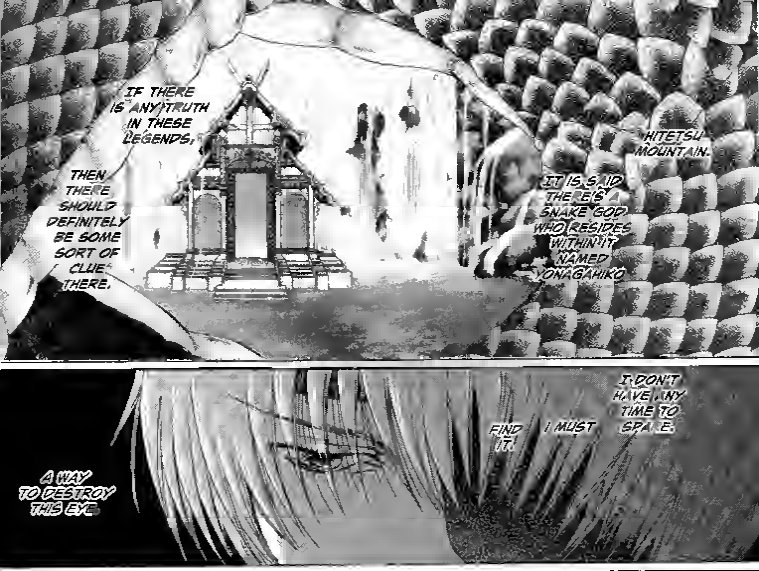
YOUR BLACK BLOOD IS EMBEDDED WITHIN THIS EYE.
NO MATTER HOW I TRY TO SUPPRESS IT WITH MEDICINE, IT WON'T WAIT LONG BEFORE CRYSTALLIZING INTO AN EGG.
IN TIME, MY HEAD WILL ROT AND IT WILL HATCH.
THIS IS MY LAST CONFES-SION.
GOU.
I HATED YOU.

GOU.
MUSN'T TOUCH.
THAT'S RIGHT, KIKURO.
AT THIS POINT IN TIME,
WHY ARE YOU MAD? HOW POINT-LESS.
I'M NO HERO.
I HAVE NO POWER.
I WENT TO A [redacted] TO DO ANY-THING.
EVEN SO.
AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I'M ANGRY.
IT'S STRANGE, ISN'T IT?

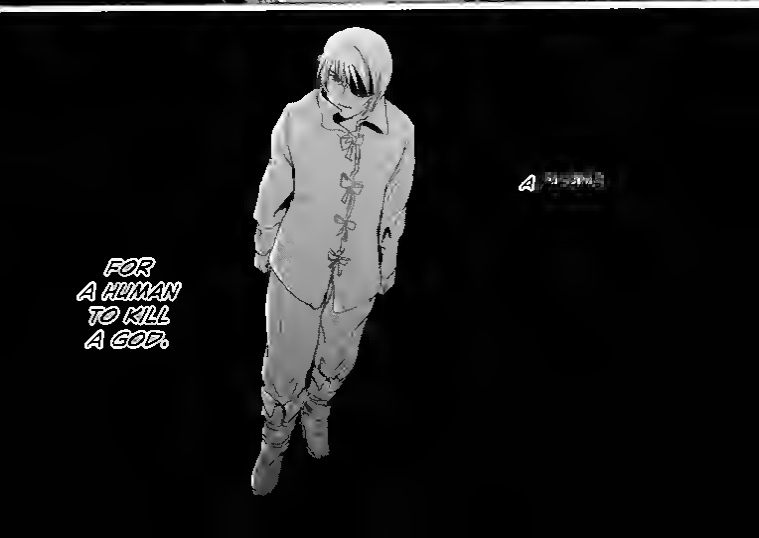
IT HAS BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE THE SECOND TIME WE MET.

WE'VE PASSED BY EACH OTHER COUNTLESS TIMES IN THAT LABORATORY.

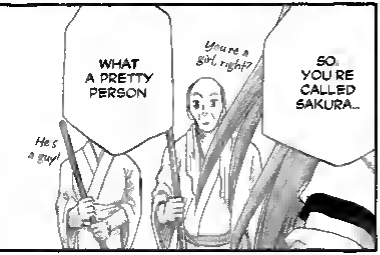

JUST CALL ME GOU.
AS FELLOW RESEARCHERS,
THERE'S NO NEED TO BE SO RESERVED.
NO NEED TO BE SO FORMAL.
YOUR UNRESERVED TONE OF VOICE AND THE WAY YOU PRETENDED TO BE ON EQUAL FOOTING
THE WAY YOU SPOKE KINDLY TO ME.
YOU WERE DECEIVING ME.
I KNEW IT.
I KNEW THE TRUE MEANING BEHIND YOUR TROUBLED SMILE.
TO CARRY OUT THE SAME DANGEROUS EXPERIMENTS OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT SOMEONE WITH A CHARACTER IN THEIR NAME WOULD NEVER TOUCH...
YEAR AFTER YEAR.
YOU WERE ORDERED.


IF THERE IS ANY TRUTH IN THESE LEGENDS,
THEN THERE SHOULD DEFINITELY BE SOME SORT OF CLUE THERE.
HITETSU MOUNTAIN.
IT IS SAID THE EVIL SNAKE GOD WHO RESIDES WITHIN IT NAMED YONAGAHIKO

I DON'T HAVE ANY TIME TO SPARE.
I MUST FIND IT.
A WAY TO DESTROY THIS EYE.


A [redacted]
FOR A HUMAN TO KILL A GOD.

OH,
UMM, YOU'RE SAKURA RIGHT?


WHAT A PRETTY PERSON
He's a guy!
You're a girl, right?
SO, YOU'RE CALLED SAKURA...

MAY I BORROW A POT? I WAS THINKING OF MAKING DINNER
AH,
IT SHOULD BE FINE IF YOU CLEAN IT UP AFTER-WARDS

AS EXPECTED, YOU WERE RIGHT.
THAT MAN EARLIER,
HE DID STEAL THE BLACK BLOOD. THERE'S NO MISTAKE, HE MUST BE GOU GASHA.
...SAKURA-HIKO-SAMA,
HITETSU MOUNTAIN IS QUITE A HIGH CLASS SANCTUARY. SOMEONE OF MY NAME WOULDN'T BE ALLOWED IN.
SO EVEN YOU CAN'T GET IN.
THANK YOU, CHOUKO

I LIVE TO SERVE!
YOUR NEXT ORDER IF YOU PLEASE
..CON-TINUE
YOUR SURVEIL-LANCE
THOUGH SERIOUSLY, WHAT A POOR LIAR
THINKING IT WOULDN'T BE SUSPICIOUS AFTER TAKING A BATH FOR THIS LONG...
IT S HARD PRE-TENDING NOT TO NOICE
Heh
I FEEL FOR YOU,
Heh
Heh
SAKURA-HIKO-SAMA.

OUCH.
IT HURTS
OWWW
FOR SOME REASON MY FOOT IS SERIOUSLY HURTING
HMM.
IF I REMEMBER,
THIS MAP IS PRETTY OLD
I WONDER IF THERE'S A WAY FOR ME TO SOMEHOW GET A NEW VERSION OF THE MAP
I GUESS IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT ASKING A HUMAN FOR HELP

BE OK IF I WENT TO A HUMAN VILLAGE?
MMMM.
BUT WOULD I
REMNANTS OF IRON SAND SIFTING FROM THE EDO PERIOD...
SO IRON REALLY WAS MANUFACTURED IN THIS MOUNTAIN.
NOW THEN, HOW TO GET INTO THE SANCTUARY?
YOMI GAHIKO SHOULD BE THE GOD RELATED TO CREATING IRON.

I ALREADY KNOW THAT I'LL GET RE-ELLED BY THE SANCTUARY'S BARRIER

I'D PROBABLY NEED A SAINT TO GET IN

HMM, A HIGH POSITIONED PRIEST OR A NOBLE WITH A FLOWER NAME...

EVEN IF HE IS A SAINT, SOMEONE WITHOUT A CHARACTER IS STILL SOMEONE WITHOUT A VENDOR.

I KNOW THAT HE STANDS OUT BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK, WHAT IF I WAS WITH HIM?

Sigh.

AND FOR A PRIEST... AT THAT AGE.

AND I DON'T WANT TO USE MY LAST RESORT.

BESIDES,

IT WOULDN'T WORK EITHER WAY UNLESS I EXPLAINED MYSELF.

Uh?

ひょこ
ひょこ
HMM..
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?!
WH...
HUH?

AAARGHH!
Goosebumps
YO...
YONA-GAHIKO?!
ARE YOU YONAGA-HIKO?!
YOU HAVE THE WRONG PERSON!
WA—
WAIT!
YOU'RE A GOD, RIGHT?

YONA-GAHIKO, WAIT!
AAARGHH!!!
AAAR GHHH!!!
AAAR GHHHH!!!
WA—
WAIT UP!
WHA...
WH...
WHAT WAS THAT?!
THAT SUR-PRISED ME.
WHO WAS HE?

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, GRANDPA STOLE A GLANCE.
!!
IS IT THAT?
IF HE DISCOVERS THAT THERE ARE GODS NOT INCLUDED IN THE "BOOK OF GODS"...
THINGS MORE HORRIFYING THAN A MILITARY FORCE WILL CONVERGE ON THIS PLACE.
HMPH. JUST WAIT.
...IT LOOKS LIKE
HE'S SEARCHING FOR HIKO.

Armies might come
the moment anyone finds out
about the existence of Gods that aren't included in the Book of Gods
Scarier things will come here...

IF HUMANS DIDN'T HAVE THE CHANCE TO SPEND THEIR CHILDHOOD TO THE FULLEST.
THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO GROW UP AS.
SERIOUS ADULTS
SERIOUSLY, JUST WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING?
IT'S LIKE THAT, RIGHT?
THIS IS A TRAP TO CATCH CATS AND BIRDS RIGHT?
This won't catch a cat.

HOW CAN THIS CATCH ANY-THING?!
IF THIS KIND OF THING CAN REALLY CATCH A GOD, THEN DOING IT WOULDN'T BE DIFFI-CULT AT ALL—!!
SERIOUSLY, JUST WHAT AM I DOING, ESPECIALLY AT AN IMPOR-TANT TIME LIKE THIS?!
DAMN IT YONAGA-HIKO—!!
COME OUT—!!!
..

AN IDIOT.
...HE'S
AND I THOUGHT THE GRANDPA WAS KIDDING WHEN HE SAID HIS GRANDSON DIDN'T GROW UP PROPERLY...
BUT HE'S ONLY STRANGE ON THE OUTSIDE. OTHERWISE, HE'S NOT THAT SCARY AT ALL.
THERE SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING ELSE OUT THERE.
HOWEVER...
...SOMETHING SMALL... LIGHT...
...FLYING ROUND THE FOREST SINCE YESTERDAY.

IS THAT SOMETHING..
ALSO LOOKING FOR YONA-GAHIKO?
HM?
I'VE NEVER SMELLED THIS SCENT BEFORE
IT SEEMS LIKE A BIG GROUP IS ON ITS WAY HERE..
IT MAY BE PEOPLE FROM THE VILLAGE.
WHO ARE THEY?
MOST OF THEM ARE HUMANS; BUT...

SLIGHTLY INHUMAN...?
IT. ALSO FEELS...
トン
SAKURA-HIKO-DONO! HERE!
OVER HERE!

THIS IS SOMETHING I DISCOVERED THIS MORNING
ISN'T IT CUTE?!
THIS ISN'T A PLACE A HUMAN WOULD LIVE IN.

WAH!
I KNOW! I JUST WANTED TO SAY IT'D BE AMAZING IF A SQUIRREL REALLY DID BUILD IT!
OF COURSE NOT!
BUT.. UMM.. FOR A SQUIRREL THIS HOUSE IS TOO BIG
..CHOUKO, LET ME SAY THIS FIRST...
SQUIRRELS DON'T BUILD HOUSES
..BE-CAUSE SOME-TIMES YOU'RE TOO HO-NEST
NOTHING
IS THERE REALLY NOTHING INSIDE?
NO PRESENCE AT ALL?
MMMM...
I JUST HAVE THIS NAGGING FEELING THAT THIS WAS BUILT RECENTLY
BUT,
MOST OF IT IS MADE OUT OF SCRAP WOOD, AND IT LOOKS FAIRLY OLD FROM THE OUTSIDE

WHEN I TOOK A PEEK FROM THE OVERHEAD, IT FELT LIKE NO ONE LIVED INSIDE.
JUST WHAT KIND OF CREATURE COULD HAVE BEEN HERE?
HERE ARE RAILINGS AND STEPS.
..THERE'S A CHANCE IT'S A HUMAN-SHAPED CREATURE, OR SOMETHING OF THAT SORT.
THE BODY SIZE IS ABOUT A THIRD OF A HUMAN'S
THIS HOUSE DIDN'T USE ANY METAL NAILS, AND IT'S ALMOST COMPLETELY MADE OUT OF WOOD.
BESIDES BEING HIGHLY INTELLECTUAL, THE WORK IS VERY SKILLFUL AND PRECISE.
UM..
IT'S MONKEYS.
THEN..?
DO MONKEYS NEED STAIRS? STUPID
IS YOUR BRAIN FULL OF MAGGOTS?
..VERY INTERESTING
THIS OBVIOUSLY WOULDN'T BE A SNAKE'S HOME
AWW..
..INTERESTING

THAT ANNOY-ING SMELL..
THAT UNNA-TURAL AND STRANGE SMELL..
WHAT IS IT..?
!

キョロッ
DO YOU HAVE IT?
YES
TO THINK THAT WE WASTED SO MUCH RESOURCES OVER JUST A SCHOLAR.
WILL WE REALLY GAIN SOMETHING FROM THIS?
ザワ
ザワ
A SHARD CALLING FOR ANOTHER SHARD.
AS LONG AS GOU GASHA IS CARRYING THE OTHER HALF, HE WON'T BE ABLE TO ESCAPE
YES,
IT'S DEFINITELY SOMETHING A SHARD CAN'T EVEN COMPARE TO.
JUST LOOK AT THE REACTION OF THIS SHARD.

IT ABSOLUTELY EXISTS
A GOD THAT ISN'T WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF GODS!
Haha!
HA HA HA!
IT'S TRUE!

HEY YOU TWO
THERE'S NO MARKET HERE TODAY HAHA—
...WHAT KIND OF PERSON IS HE?
DID HE COME FROM THE OUTSIDE?
!?
WH...
HEY...
WHAT...
...WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE GOD THAT RESIDES HERE?

WAAH...
ANSWER ME
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE GOD THAT RESIDES HERE?
HUH...?!
YOU...
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT...
YONAGA-HIKO-DONO... RIGHT?!
Wu-Wha... What kind of joke is this?!
YONA-GAHIKO...
DO YOU PEOPLE WORSHIP THIS GOD?

HUH..?
OH?
YOU GUYS ARE BELITTLING THE ONLY OMNIPOTENT GOD IN THE CAPITAL.
TSK, TSK.
YOU GUYS WON'T WORSHIP THAT KIND OF PATHETIC GIANT BUG-LIKE ABNORMALITY FROM THE DIRT, AND RESPECT AND REVERE HIM AS A GOD, RIGHT?
THAT THESE GUYS WILL TREAT THAT GUY WITH REVERENCE AND RESPECT FOR SURE
I KNOW WITHOUT ASKING
HUH?
I JUST FEEL...
WHAT...
...?
OH, SO THAT'S HOW IT IS
IT SEEMS LIKE IT'S TIME TO TEACH YOU GUYS WHAT IT MEANS TO TRULY WORSHIP AND OBEY
THEY CALL HIM RESPECTFULLY
AS "DONO"

ボタ
ボタ
GATHER ALL THE VILLAGERS
WOMEN AND CHILDREN. ALL OF THEM. DON'T LET EVEN A SINGLE ONE ESCAPE.
ALLOW THIS KAMITAGAE TO RELEASE YOU
DIRECTLY PLACING THE BUGS INTO YOUR BODIES

OUR MAIN MISSION IS TO TAKE CARE OF GOU GASHA.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE LEAVING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO THAT GUY.
HE REALLY USES TAIGE OFTEN TO PLACE THIS SORT OF TECHNIQUE
BUT I THINK THESE GUYS WOULD KNOW, RIGHT?
LEAVING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ME ISN'T A PROBLEM.
HMMM..
HOW IS THAT?
LIVE TOGETHER IN THE SHRINE AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN.
I'VE HEARD THAT MAN WITH THE EYE PATCH AND HIS COMPANION.
EVEN THOUGH I DON'T KNOW WHICH AREA'S GOD HE IS BUT IF I TORTURE HIM, HE'LL TELL ME
SPEAKING OF WHICH I'VE HEARD HIS COMPANION IS VERY CUTE.
Oh?
Tenyh?e Ik'ka tenyh?
THEN LET'S GO OVER THERE QUICKLY.
OH, I GET IT
*Celestial Being

SAKURA-HIKO-DONO,
KAMITAGAE AND HIS CROWD HAVE ALSO COME
AH
CHIKA-GE-ONEE-SAN!
I KNOW
I KNEW IT FROM THE SMELL JUST NOW
I WAS ABOUT TO SAY "HI" BECAUSE I KNEW CHIKAGE AND THEM CAME.
FUFU FUFU...

むにゅ～
AH!
HUH!
Mm Thanks for the good work
ONEE-SAMA!
I'M SO SORRY I MADE YOU WAIT
COME I'LL GIVE THIS TO YOU YUKIO'S COMING OVER TOO
YUKIO-ONEE-SAN'S HERE! SHE'S ALREADY HERE! OVER THERE!
CHOUKO, YOU ARE THE SAME AS EVER
Even though I She really like always Onee sticks to Sama Sakurahiko-dono...
EH!
Fufufu...
MMM.
MY BREASTS?
IS SHE TALKING ABOUT MY BREASTS?
ガ"
#
AH..
HELLO

YES.
YOU THREE HAVEN'T GATHERED LIKE THIS FOR A LONG TIME!
CHIKAGE, THERE ARE USUALLY A FEW MISTAKES IN THE THINGS YOU DO.
BUT THIS IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENT... IS THIS SEAL REAL? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE REAL OWNER OF THIS?
FUFUFU. THAT QUESTION IS SO UNINTERESTING
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE SOMETHING SAKURAHIKO-DONO WOULD ASK.
HEARING THAT QUESTION MAKES IT FEEL AS IF IT'S A LITTLE FOOLISH.

FOR A RURAL AREA.
THIS PLACE IS QUITE IMPRESSIVE
I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.
GOU GASHA SHOULDN'T BE TOO FAR FROM HERE.
JUST BE CAREFUL.
LET'S STAY HERE FOR NOW.
THIS JOB CAN BE FINISHED QUICKLY, SO WE WON'T HAVE TO STAY HERE FOR LONG.
BUT FROM WHAT THE VILLAGERS AROUND HERE HAVE SAID, SOMEONE HAS ALREADY STARTED TO KEEP AN EYE ON THEM.
WE'VE ALREADY LOST CONTACT WITH THE FRONT LINE OF TROOPS

COULD IT BE A SPIRIT YONAGA HIKO CREATED?
GOU GASHA IS ONLY A SCHOLAR I DIDN'T THINK HE HAD THE POWER TO USE A SHARD...
...BUT THIS SURE IS CONFUSING
HE'LL RUN AWAY AS SOON AS YOU MAKE HIM CRY
YES, That's true.
BUT THE HUGE SNAKE JUST DOESN'T HAVE A REASON TO PROTECT HIM.
IS IT JUST MY IMAGINATION?
THERE SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING...
?

THERE ISN'T ANY-THING SUSPI-CIOUS HERE
HMM..
NO..
THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT-SIDE..
!!

TEN...
TEN-JIN?!
SUCH
SUCH A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG LADY
WHY WOULD TENJIN-DONO?!
Wah! Her hair!
In this kind of place?!
NO...
NO IT'S A YOUNG MAN?!

I'M NOT AS AMAZING AS TENJIN-DONO,
I'M JUST A... FAKE TENJIN
WITHOUT ANY NAME TO THIS WORTH-LESS BODY,
I AM CALLED SAKURA.
YOU SHOULD BE PART OF KAMITAGAE'S GROUP.
PLEASE LOOK AT THIS IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENT. I AM A MINOR OFFICIAL HERE TO ASSIST KAMITAGAE-DONO
AH...
A LOCAL OFFICIAL
THANKS FOR YOUR HARD WORK
はい。
YES!
あぁ...

THIS WORTHLESS BODY OF MINE
HOPES KAMITAGAE-DONO AND EVERYONE
TO PLEASE USE IT AS MUCH AS THEY DESIRE! IT DOESN'T MATTER AT ALL!
AH...
OK...
THANKS FOR THE HARD WORK.
COULD I GET A CUP OF TEA...?
YES! I'LL PREPARE IT RIGHT AWAY!
ONE CUP OF TEA.
YES!
I, CHOUKO, WILL NEED TO PREPARE IT CAREFULLY.

WAS IT ONLY MY IMAGI-NATION?
ふ…
I...
ALSO DON'T KNOW...
WHETHER OR NOT HE'S STILL IN THIS AREA...

BUT,
HE REALLY DID DROP THIS THING...
IT LOOKS LIKE A REALLY OLD MAP
IT HAS GOT TO BE PRICE-LESS
HEY!
YONA-GAHIKO! THIS IS YOURS!
CAN YOU HEAR ME—?
NO...
I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF HE REALLY IS YONAGAHIKO. HIS HEAD IS TOO SMALL!
IF YOU WANT ME TO GIVE IT BACK TO YOU, SHOW YOUR-SELF!
OR ELSE I'LL TEAR IT APART!
AND BURN IT!
YOU DON'T WANT THAT, DO YOU?!

I'M PLACING THE THING HERE —!
prepared various tools...
Ah My neck hurts
What's he saying?
IF I WANTED TO KNOCK HIM OUT, WOULD USING A STICK BE BEST?
IT SHOULD BE
I'VE HELPED YOU BUILT A SMALL ROOF,
BUT IF IT RAINS, I WON'T CARE —!
USING THIS SORT OF THING AS HOS-TAGE.
I'M REALLY AT MY WITS END

...STRANGE
WHAT'S WITH THAT GUY?
...COULD HE BE A GOOD GUY?
ピクッ
!
ﾊﾞﾝ

トクン
IT WON'T HURT...

IT'S HERE...?!
COME...
WHAT...
THE SHARD ...
IS CALL-ING TO THE OTHER SHARD
WHAT ARE YOU JOKING ABOUT...?!
DON'T JOKE AROUND!
I DON'T WANT TO DIE IN THIS KIND OF PLACE!

!!
!?
HOW DO I SAY THIS...
YOU BROUGHT THIS UPON YOURSELF
ME LOSING THE MAP
IS YOUR FAULT, TOO
Ah
My feet hurts

TETSUICHI 1 / END

TETSUICHI vol.1

Because I drew too many pages,

There wasn't even space at the back for random things...

(blush)

I'll try to pay more attention starting in the second volume

Oh, hello!

I'm always like this. Too slow and not working according to deadlines... that's how I made myself pale

Please critique and guide me. Please take care of me

I will learn and draw at the same time every day. Go me!

I wrote so fast I forgot to use kanji...

Starting from the second volume, I plan to work lightning fast

Ooh~

HELP WANTED

The fabulous Kingdom of Iskultrip Scans is in need of more servants fitting to serve le King! We are calling for ***TRANSLATORS***, ***EDITORS***, and ***SCANNERS*** from all walks of life! Due to certain circumstances, those who are experts in their crafts are heeded to apply!

For more information, visit the reception at http://iskultrip.maryfaye.net and inquire NOW!

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